MOODS AND MELODIES

BEN PURSE

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AMERICAN FOUNDATION
FOR THE BLIND INC.

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THE AUTHOR.

MOODS AND MELODIES

A Book of Verse

BY

BEN PURSE

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NOTE

The verses contained in this little volume were written in leisure moments during the past fifteen years. Most of the poems have already been published in various newspapers and periodicals, and I am grateful to the respective editors for permission to reprint them here.

No literary merit is claimed for the compositions. They accurately reflect the tastes and temperament of a very ordinary citizen.

B.P.

October, 1931.

FOREWORD

This little book of verse reveals a man of many friendships—human friendships and the no less real friendships of flowers, birds, trees and stars. It reveals also a man of many moods—the enthusiast who, in a moment snatched from time, can conceive a lovely night as a gift of God "perchance for me alone"; the lover of lost years who broods and dreams where "a river reft of lilies wanders on." Yet the revelation it affords is secretive, in so far that only in odd lines and phrases can we see the man of action and his brain of facts and figures. His mind can see and serve the rose "so comely and so shy," but it can also see and serve "the wounds of suffering men." The appreciation of a man's thought is multiplied infinitely when we know of the sincerity where the thought had being, and of the action behind the emotion.

To Mr. Ben Purse, "the world is still full with precious schemes," and not least of these precious schemes is his own work for those who, like himself are only able to see beauty with the eyes of the mind.

J. DE LA MARE ROWLEY.

MISCELLANEOUS VERSE.

A FRAGMENT.

Doth mem'ry wake no dreams for thee of vanished years?
Nor yield one honeyed flower by kindly zephyrs blown?
Can time and circumstance mar or obliterate
Those peerless pearls of friendship once our own?

Yon starry scheme whose luscious glow doth kiss the earth,
Fails not, nor pales for me thro' all the changing years;
The silv'ry moon I saw as 'twere but yestere'en,
Lightens my darkest hours thro' smile-suffusèd tears.

Yon sun whose laughing face upon the dewy grass
So oft I saw, will dwell with me while life doth last;
Those golden rays of scintillating hue I love
Shine in thy pure effulgence. Geth-semane is past.

SOMEWHERE.

As the shadows of ev'ning fall, Marie,
And we sit in the firelight's glow,
Building castles in fairyland,
Or keeping tryst in the long ago;
Thus to linger and dream in Arcady,
'Twas there first we met, I trow;
To yearn for those gladsome, golden hours
Is a joy that the heart doth know.

The darkness is gath'ring fast, Marie,
And the wind o'er the moorland sweeps,
And storm and calm will oft return
To the shrine where thy brave heart sleeps;
Yet somewhere, perchance in Arcady,
They will plight their troth once more,
When the Captain guides his trusty barque
And we make for a farther shore.

ADIEU.

A Song.

Adieu, Francesca, I must leave thee, dearest,
The cruel fates decree that we must part.
Farewell, belovèd, may no thoughts of sadness
Change thy affection, or this constant heart.
If I could tell thee, dearest, how I love thee,
Ere from thy side they hurry me away;
If I may kiss those lips again, Francesca,
Bravely endure will I the darkest day.

Refrain—

Queen of my soul, Heaven knows how I adore thee!
One last embrace ere from thee I must part.
The whisp'ring southern wind with perfume laden
Oft shall murmur love-thoughts to thy fond heart.

Farewell, Francesca, drums are beating wildly,
A luckless star hath summoned me to go.
Why hasten forth to slay a hapless foeman?
Perchance a sweetheart waits for him, I trow.
When I return, the fev'rish conflict over,
In some sweet cot beside a patient stream,
Fond tales of love, with music all entrancing
We will unfold as rays of sunset beam.

Refrain—

Queen of my life, Heaven knows how I adore thee!
One last embrace ere from thee I must part.
A whisp'ring southern breeze with perfume laden
Oft shall echo love-thoughts to thy fond heart.

A FRAGMENT.

Dearest, the moon is rising
Over yon azure sea;
Do you remember, sweetheart?
Do you recall with me
One little thought like a wavelet,
Whisper'd to you by me?

Dearest, the moon in its glory
Shines o'er the tranquil sea;
Here in this old-world garden
Have you a message for me?
One little thought like a wavelet,
Wafted from you to me.

REMEMBRANCE.

I treasure the rose you gave me, dear,
The night that has long since fled;
Tho' the petals are faded, the perfume gone,
And the leaves are withered and dead:
Yet as long as this wayward heart doth beat,
And the soul to itself be true,
I will dream of the days in those halcyon years
When I kept a tryst with you.

The tall trees sway in the wind. my dear,
And birds in the branches sing;
The stream by the neighb'ring mill glides on,
And the primrose tells of Spring;
Yet the sound of a voice from a distant wood
Is an echo I fain would know:
There the cuckoo croons his plaintive notes,
And the hawthorn blossoms grow.

WHEN YOU GAVE YOUR LOVE TO ME.

When you gave your love to me, sweetheart,
And the golden autumn vied
With the beauty of the old-world tryst,
The garden, the pier and the restless tide.
Do you remember the vows we made
In azure ev'ning's golden hours?
Ah! it seems tho' it were but yesterday,
Tho' life be replete with storm and showers.

The night winds are singing a melody
As the restless tide rolls on;
The hills and the valleys are wrapt in sleep,
The singing birds all gone.
Let us linger awhile on the old stone pier,
Allured by the silv'ry moon,
Dreaming the dear days over again,
Days that have vanished all too soon.

The night winds are singing a lullaby,
And a song of the bygone years
Enthrals my soul with the perfect bliss
That banishes sorrow and tears.
The garden belov'd by the old stone pier,
The moonlight, the starry sea—
All these, and a thousand joys were mine
When you gave your love to me.

A FRAGMENT.

'Twas early Springtime when we met,
The swallow scarce had built her nest;
Nature was robing for the fête,
Her smiles the sweetest and the best.
We met in those auspicious days,
The world lay laughing at our feet:
Old Boreas' brow no longer lowered,
A kindlier zephyr did us greet.

The summer came, and you came too,
Life yielded pleasure unalloyed;
The hours were all too brief for us,
Doubtless 'twere true we overjoyed.
As fades the fragrance of the rose,
So those Elysian dreams are o'er;
Faint echoes of what might have been
Steal thro' the gloaming-tide no more.

A FRAGMENT.

One of the sweetest of all days is closing;
The sun is slowly setting in the crimson west,
Clothing yon hills with golden sheen unrivalled;
There on the uplands, cattle grazing, are at rest.

There is a rich incense borne on the breezes;
The magic of this hour of bliss, what words can tell!
Far, far away, as from a world enchanted,
Sounds rise and fall, as waves are driven by the swell.

The wind is softly sighing, and its music
Makes melody entrancing as it glides along;
Thro' the clover and the trees soft it whispers,
While overhead the lark pours forth a joyous song.

There's not a garden flower with perfume laden,
Whose mystic beauty, transient tho' it be,
Wakes not for each some tender recollection
Of vanish'd years, or cherish'd thoughts, dearest, of thee.

REGRET.

Oh, love, my love, the fitful day is done!
  Here in the twilight shadows, quite apart,
I sit and yearn for you so far away;
  You who are all to me—heart of my heart,
I never sought to blame you, dearest one,
  I who could ne'er possess the priceless pearl
God needed for some other life than mine;
  'Tis mine, the only treasure—just a curl!

Oh, love, my love, as darker grows the night,
  Clearly I see across the span of years
Some wreckage of my fondest hopes strewn wide;
  Some laughter—but more pain and bitter tears.
Leave me not lonely in this midnight hour!
  Stay, spirit, stay! I feel thy magic spell!
Thy presence puts to flight my ev'ry fear;
  My soul is calm—the spirit cries "Farewell!"

TO A BLACKBIRD.

Singing blithesome, dearest blackbird, love
of mine is all for thee;
Not a note of sadness echoes on the breezes
borne to me:
How the tender chords of mem'ry inter-
mingle with thy song!
Naught is loss when thou art near me,
sweetest birdeen, tarry long.

What a dark, drear world to dwell in were
it not for such as thee!
Mighty forests, glades and woodlands free
of access are to me,
When thy joyous song triumphant greets
me at the early dawn;
Deep-souled yearnings lure me onward as
thy cadences are born.

Like some dream which half-remember'd,
lingers vaguely in the mind;
Like a smile which all-transfusing leaves
pure happiness behind:
So thy song, my magic minstrel, shall
resound while time doth last—
Sing again thy songs entrancing—all my
weariness is past!

When the ev'ning shadows gather and thy
songs I hear no more,
What fate holds in yon far vista, whether
sullen tempests roar—
Tho' I know not what betideth when the
Stygian stream is cross'd,
If thou greet me there, my birdeen, joy were
mine to bear the cost.

AUTUMN.

The harvest–time is well–nigh spent, dear friend;
The glory of the autumn days hath come;
The reapers' song that we were wont to hear
Hath vanished with the busy insects' hum.

With eager eyes we scan the neighb'ring mead,
The cattle are returning home to rest;
A lonely skylark chants his requiem:
The moon will soon appear, our nightly guest.

Yet, look! the sun is taking one last dip,
Enshrining all the world with hues of gold—
Who can depict the splendour of this scene?
Entrancing beauty that will ne'er grow old.

Give me your hand, sweet friend, ere night doth fall,
Let us renew the love of other years;
In calm or storm, whatever fate betide,
Dispell'd by mutual trust are all our fears.

The sun's last ray of scintillating hue
Hath kiss'd the earth ere we could say "good–night."
Shadows of twilight robe the world in grey;
We fall asleep, to wake with morning's light.

We will not murmur tho' the Lethean
stream
Must needs be cross'd ere yet the journey
end;
A kindly mariner will steer our barque.
Take heart, be brave, and wait the signal,
friend!

A FRAGMENT.

Where the silver moon is peeping
From behind yon poplar tree,
And the lilt of rhythmic cadence
From afar steals o'er the lea;
Where the minstrels of the woodlands
Have carolled their last lay,
And soft zephyrs perfume laden
From afar are borne to me.
Where the harebell and the
sweet wild rose lie dreaming
Upon this mossy bank,
I'll rest awhile,
Without a thought of sadness,
Of the city's sordid madness;
With an all-absorbing gladness,
As the shadows cross the dial.

AUTUMN.

Hail, in this joyous hour of plenitude,
  Thine the most precious jewel of the year!
Sweet Autumn-time, we love thee fervently:
  Age doth not rob thee of thy charm, nor sere
The mystic beauty of thy smiling face.
  The tawny bees are resting after toil—
A wondrous fragrance scents the morning air,
  Odour of fading leaves amingling with the soil.

Ah, yes, it was but yestere'en I saw
  This fair land clad in cloth of gold, and now
The reaper, gath'ring his last sheaves, moves on,
  Glad that the harvest days are o'er. Hark how
The falling leaves are crackling 'neath your feet—
  The sheen majestic of the countryside
Enthrals your soul; yet ere you wake 'tis gone.
  The sweetest time of all the year is autumn-tide.

IN MOOD REFLECTIVE.

In mood reflective, one November day,
  At leisure stray'd I o'er the countryside;
The crackling leaves beneath my feet fore-
    told
  That winter was at hand; the sad wind
    sigh'd.

The wild flowers from the woods have dis-
    appeared,
  The virgin beauty from the hedgerows
    gone;
A robin trills entrancingly hard by,
  A river reft of lilies wanders on.

They're gone, the blossoms that I lov'd so
    well;
  E'en yon lone rose, the garden's peerless
    prize,
Will waft its fragrance to some other
    sphere.
  The soul transcends all worlds—the
    casket dies!

Still there's a sweetness in the crisp clear
    air;
  Inhale the odour of the rich brown loam;
The perfume from the dying leaves doth
    make
  An incense purer than the gift of Rome.

How swift have flown the years since last
    I saw
  That ivy-cover'd cottage by the stream!
Where are the faces I was wont to see?
  The swain who drove old Farmer Giles's
    team?

Oh, where are all those guileless folk I
lov'd,
The lads and lasses on the village green?
The woeful towns have lur'd them from
their homes;
The past looms like a mem'ry-haunting
dream!

Their simple tastes and primal joys are
gone—
They seek the turmoil of the crowded
mart.
Alas, they know the drama all too well;
How often must they play the tragic part!

A thousand tender mem'ries cluster round
This grassy slope where elm and ash tree
grow;
The poplars stand erect as sentinels;
'Tis here I'd wander when the lilacs
blow.

AT CLOSE OF DAY.

'Tis eventide, and here upon this lovely hill,
Absorb'd in sweet creation's vast array, I pause.
The mighty trees stand gaunt and bare against the sky;
The wind makes plaintive music thro' the branches nude.

Yon fading sun hath swath'd the hill in cloth of gold,
The rugged stream below shines like an amethyst;
The shimmering hue of all around is exquisite,
For here Nature doth commune with the soul of things.

Ere I could breathe a fond farewell, the sun had gone
Across the world, to lighten other hearts and spheres;
And now the peaceful twilight shadows gather round,
Purest, most sacred gloaming-tide enfolds the earth.

Oh, wond'rous night, whose mystic spell enthrals my soul,
Teach this poor wayward heart the truths of life to prize;
Perchance for me alone God sent this lovely night;
The starry schemes, I speak to them and worship for mine own.

Those silver bells of memory, that
seem'd mute for aye,
Lightly are borne to me in cadences
entrancing.
Oh, precious moments! Am I awake or
dreaming?
Rich threads of gold and gossamer the
night winds blow.

Oh, time delectable—for me, voluptuous
night!
In all thy sensuous beauty, sweetest star,
shine on!
Thou art the triumph of a myriad worlds
gone by;
I, just a bubble on the restless wavelets
blown.

Sweet moonlight, softly stealing o'er fair
Harrow Hill,
Thou art the reflex of a soul dispassionate,
A beacon light for all, shining serenely pure,
A mirror yielding glimpses of eternity.

To be alone on such a night were bliss
indeed,
Standing between two worlds in ecstasy
untold;
Naught but the watch-dog's hollow bay falls
on mine ear,
Save at brief intervals is heard the owl's
weird cry.

To be alone is good, and yet methinks, sweet friend,
If thou wert nigh I'd crave for nothing more in life;
We drank our wine together in the halcyon days,
A kindly star hath whisper'd we shall drink again.

Then I will tell thee all my hopes and fears, the dreams
Wherein I revell'd with delight at all I saw;
Now as I quit this holy place a stareen sings
Of the happy tidal when we shall meet again.

AN INTERLUDE.

How can I tell you, dearest,
  All that this heart doth know?
You that made life a daydream;
  Sweetheart, I love you so!
Tenderly I remember
  Those eyes with a wond'rous gaze;
Just one last kiss ere you leave me
  At the parting of the ways.

If in the great world's battle
  We're bruised by the hands of fate,
The dear dead days we'll remember,
  Though love came our way too late.
Maybe you'll strive to forget me;
  Yes, I'll learn to understand;
Dearest, the stars are weeping—
  Do not withhold your hand.

You have pass'd where the shadows deepen,
  But I linger here alone;
"Mizpah!" the waves are singing,
  Soothing the night wind's moan.
Whether we strive to remember,
  Or whether we try to forget,
You were mine alone in the old days—
  Dearest, I love you yet.

INTERLUDE.

As I linger in the meadow at the dying of
the day,
And the perfume from the clover by the
breeze is borne away,
Where the daisies all are dreaming in the
glory of the glades,
And a thrush is blithely singing as the sun-
light slowly fades;
I am waiting here your coming, every
moment in the grass
Thrills my heart with eager yearning; will
you smile on me and pass?
Will you say you never knew me, never
cared my love to own—
Will you pass me by thus coldly, though I
wait for you alone?

As I wander thro' the woodlands where the
hyacinth doth grow,
The trees are whisp'ring tales of love where
the rills and brooklets flow;
And the music of the night wind lures me
back to other days,
As dreamily I saunter by the mere and
thro' the haze.
Oh, a thousand thoughts are waking as I
wend my way between
The meadow and the woodlands, and across
the glist'ning stream;
You'll come no more at eventide, the linnet
tells me so;
I'll strive to forget I lov'd you, as you've
forgotten—heigh-ho!

A FRAGMENT.

Thou art my friend! That this is truly so,
By acid test of stern adversity,
A thousand times thou hast reveal'd to me;
No sacrifice thou would'st not undergo.

I am thine honour'd friend—and thou to me
Art dearer far than fame or wealth or power;
Thy love and friendship lost for but one hour
Would cause me pain thro' all eternity.

In this fair wood, here wand'ring at our ease,
Where bracken sweet and fragrant violets grow—
I ask naught else, no other joy to know
Than our proud friendship, constant as the seas.

'Tis night! A clarion call borne on the breeze
Summons us hence—our tent is struck—we go!
I ask naught else, not e'en the reason why;
Into the mists we pass, with ne'er a sigh.

YOU WILL COME.

You will come in the early Springtime
To the woods where the wild-flowers grow;
You will list to the zephyrs singing,
And their message you'll learn to know.
All your hopes and fears I'll share them too,
And down where the violets blow
I can tell you my schemes and a thousand dreams
Of joy that the heart doth know.

You will come in the gladsome Summer
To the garden where roses sweet
Will greet you with their perfume rare,
And the song of the birds be replete.
You will pass where the rich verbena grows,
And lilies begirt the stream;
Fond tales of love will re-echo above
The vale where sweet poppies dream.

You will come in the golden Autumn,
Ere the harvest days are o'er;
You will keep a tryst in the twilight
By the orchard in old Glendore.
Then must I tell you I love you,
Perchance you may say me "nay."
While the moon is asleep and no star doth peep,
You will kiss me and whisper "Stay!"

TO A LOST FRIEND.

So we must part for ever, dearest friend;
Think what this means to both, life's journey through;
Your love has counter'd many an acid test,
My faith has never falter'd, friend, in you.

Think of those dear old times when you and I
In childhood's daydreams play'd beside yon stream;
Pause for a moment ere you say good-bye,
Our love the merest trifle do not deem.

If e'er I wronged you, may I be forgiven,
Your love is more to me than wealth untold;
Not all the riches of the hemispheres
Could bring me joy, sweet friend, were your love cold.

By all that we hold precious in this life,
I plead with you forget this little wrong;
Our mutual love will lighten darkest days,
Transforming thoughts of sadness into song.

You heed me not; but sadly turn aside—
I would not have believ'd you'd treat me so.
Farewell, but should you ever need me, friend,
My heart and hand are always yours, you know!

AN INTERLUDE.

Here in these pine woods where the breath of eve
Distils sweet odours from vast Nature's store,
Where melody and old romance do weave
Love tales retold a myriad times and more,
I listen'd as so oft I'd done of yore.
Yet ever and anon it seem'd to me,
Tho' waves may wildly lash yon rugged shore,
Where storm clouds break, eternity must be.

The bird I'm wont to hear in yon sweet dell
At eventide, recalls some sacred hours
When in the heyday of our youth, the well
Of pleasures unalloyed failed not, and flowers,
Loveliest blooms of every shade and hue,
In all a rich festoon of glorious sheen,
Made holiday of life for me and you.

The song I'm wont to hear in this fair dell
At gloaming tide, hath braced my soul to meet
With fortitude life's darker days, and fell
With Vulcan might the demon lie; my feet
So oft upon this holy ground have trod,
But grim forebodings made me oft retreat
Ere I had learn'd that this way leads to God.

WHEN I SAW YOU FIRST, VEE.

When I saw you first, Vee,
  You were just a wee tot;
How you prattled to me!
The subject—what matter—
  For you cared not a jot,
When I saw you first, Vee.

When I saw you next, Vee,
  You were ever so shy—
Tho' you curtsied so free,
And I—well, I wonder'd,
  As you swiftly pass'd by,
When I saw you then, Vee.

I met you again, Vee,
  After long years had sped;
Fate had made a decree!
You had learn'd to forget;
  So my idol was dead,
When you met me thus, Vee.

When I saw you last, Vee,
  You were one of a crowd;
It was nothing to me
Had you cared to remember—
  Tho' you'd grown mighty proud
When I saw you last, Vee.

A FRAGMENT.

Beside an ivied wall to-night alone I stand,
The tall trees sweetly converse in the gentle breeze;
A thousand fragrant mem'ries wake in this fair spot,
And weave again rich dreams of gossamer and gold.

The happy rural echoes I was wont to hear,
Vibrant, rich melodies no art can imitate,
These old-world greetings wake a once ecstatic joy,
And life is sweeten'd by such fond remembrances.

Still ling'ring 'midst these old familiar scenes, I strive
To face the stolid facts of life, to estimate
The chances I have miss'd, the prize I might have gain'd;
Surely 'tis not for this alone man strives to live.

When I look out upon the world of men, and count
The many things which I enjoy and others lack,
I thank the gods for gifts of books and precious friends—
For that real wealth, the strength to earn my daily bread.

FRIENDSHIP.

I pluck'd a tiny flower from out the dreary
waste,
And nurtur'd it with tenderness and care;
It grew in strength and beauty as the days
sped by,
And years but serve to make it still more
fair.
This flower, like truth, doth live thro' all
eternity;
It doth withstand the tempest and the
flame.
No earthly power can e'er dispel its subtle
charm;
'Tis yours—'tis mine—and friendship is
its name.

The lily fair that grows beside yon patient
stream
Distils her incense on the evening breeze.
The fragrance of the flower, the landscape
and the stars,
Recall a thousand joyous scenes; and
seas
Of happy faces that I knew and lov'd of yore
Rise in battalions from the shoals of time,
And cry exultantly with one accord,
"Comrades
Are we for aye, despite of creed or
clime!"

MY QUEEN.

When you were a tiny tot, my Queen,
Some thirty summers ago, maybe,
Where love and laughter were rang'd around,
In virgin joy of unsullied glee.

Castles I built in the golden sand,
While you counted the sea-shells one by one;
The bucket and spade are laid aside—
The sea-shells with which you toy'd are gone.

When you were a maid of sweet sixteen—
Some summers, I ween, have pass'd since then—
I dare not name you "My Fairy Queen,"
To you I was merely known as Ben.

Modest and sweet as the violet
That grew in the lovely wood hard by,
I've watched you grow into womanhood—
I've seen both the primrose and violet die.

Dame Fortune hath smiled on you, my Queen,
She hath given to you of her choicest store,
Much honour and wealth and pride of place;
For what treasure then can the heart yearn more?

There is a picture before me now,
A simple maiden of vanish'd years;
The sunlight plays in her golden hair,
My dream-child—a mem'ry—and then, some tears.

THE ROBIN.

We met in early winter,
When your heart was blithe and free;
Your liquid notes breath'd happiness,
I knew you trusted me.
I looked into your sparkling eyes,
And hoped you'd leave me never,
Tho' Fortune's smile might fickle prove,
With me you'd stay for ever.

I talk'd with you in springtime,
When your heart was full of glee,
Your songs were bliss ecstatic,
They were sung for only me;
You greeted old-time neighbours
With a warmth 'twas good to see;
I lov'd you then, as now, dear—
May you long remember'd be.

I joy'd with you, my darling,
In the merry month of June,
Where rose-queens blush'd in every bower,
But faded all too soon.
Your magic lute enthrall'd me
Thro' the sultry August days;
With a fondness all-absorbing
I had learn'd your tender ways.

I waited for my robin
When the golden harvest came;
But no tidings heard I of him,
Tho' I called him by his name.
Somewhere, perchance, in Arcady,
When the harvest days are o'er,
That robin will return to me—
I ask for nothing more.

DOWN OUR WAY.

A Ballad.

If ever you are down our way,
And feel inclined for friendly chat,
Please call upon us when you may,
We will not keep you on the mat.
In Summer Street, the kindly folk
Will always greet you with a smile;
They're not too prim to crack a joke,
Nor too reserved to laugh the while.

I love the people in our street;
Did you but know them half so well,
You'd sing their praises and repeat
The stories I am wont to tell.
Such neighbours one is glad to meet
On working days or days of rest;
With simple honesty replete,
Their souls have feasted on the best.

So call upon us when you may,
We will not keep you on the mat;
You're ever welcome down this way;
Pray come, and be assured of that.
Come in the springtime of the year,
When birdeens sing and lambs do play!
When not a thought of care is near,
And Nature makes glad holiday.

Then in the calm of closing years,
Fast hurrying to the ebb-tide flow,
'Twill quiet all our anxious fears
To march together, and to know

That He who mark'd the sparrow's fall
  Hath fashion'd us for worthier ends;
We do but dally in the hall—
  Eternity unites all friends.

And if, perchance, some old sweet song
  May linger in the memory still,
The choirs angelic, loud and long,
  Will yet have power to charm and thrill.
Then all the children from our street
  Will frolic as in days of yore;
There you and I are sure to meet,
  When the dull tasks of life are o'er.

So call upon us when you may,
  We will not keep you on the mat;
You're ever welcome down this way—
  Pray come, and be assured of that.
In Summer Street, the kindly folk
  Will always greet you with a smile;
They're not too prim to crack a joke,
  Nor too reserved to laugh the while.

THE SPAN OF YEARS.

I look with pleasure 'cross the span of years,
Nor vainly sigh for that which might have been.
The days have brought much care, more joy, some tears;
Then why not keep life's memory sweet and clean?
Oh, fragrant blossoms of this transient June,
What erstwhile dreams you wake, what lustre spend!
The lark's entrancing notes may cease at noon,
But 'twill return, transcendent songs to tend.

Within a neighbouring wood at gloaming-tide
I oft-times steal to hear a blackbird sing;
The troubles of the day are laid aside,
While resting there my every grief takes wing;
These magic notes enthral my wayward soul,
And unalloyed felicity doth stream
In cloudless beauty to a mystic goal;
Thus Heaven is nearer brought than in my dream.

So all the tasks of life much sweeter grow,
For their design doth meet a common end.
The stranger brushed aside may prove, you know,
In spite of all, to be your staunchest friend.

Why need you frown upon this troubled
world?
Some far less fortunate more bravely
show;
Sweet radiant eyes love's banner have un-
furl'd,
And happiness diffuses its rich glow.

Methinks I've often watched him pass this
way,
So often looked into those smiling eyes;
And if I met him not throughout the day,
I wonder'd why, and vaguely would
surmise.
And sometimes I would talk with him
awhile,
A worthy man, and one of good intent;
'Tis sweet to greet his always cheery smile;
Kindness would reign with him where'er
he went.

Dear neighbour, know you not this happy
face?
Have you ne'er looked into those laughing
eyes?
Have you not met him in the market place?
Or did you gaze alone on leaden skies?
One day for him my search in vain must be,
At early morn, at noon, or eventide;
A gentle seraph o'er a sun-kiss'd sea
The soul to his Creator will confide.

SWEET HEATHER WHITE.

This perfume is of loam from moorlands far
away,
Where the tall fern and bracken sweet
entwine;
The lilt and rhythmic music of a stream so
gay
Gladdens the weary heart and comforts
mine.
Here the rich fauna thrives; nature at work
and play,
In beauty unsurpassed, her schemes com-
bine
All that is best and noblest in the panoply.
Hark to the promptings of her soul
sublime!

Have you a favour purchased at the
carnival—
This honoured feast at which we celebrate
With rare unstinted praise, in speech and
madrigal?
The joy that comes from service conse-
crate,
All that we prize within this sphere terres-
trial,
The sweet spontaneous gift, so small, so
great,
The vast transcendent wonder-world
celestial,
Are lost, when to do good we hesitate.

Emblem of chastity and grace! sweet heather white,
None need reluctant be this day to wear;
We have enrolled with those who reverence truth and right,
Thus Celt and Saxon fadeless laurels share!
Those hapless children dear, who know not Heaven's sweet light,
They are indeed our special charge and care!
We dare not then withhold from them that second sight,
The means that they may breathe God's own pure air!

Help us to take these little ones from noisome slums,
Where music of the tides hath power to thrill,
Where carefree nature smiles incessantly, nor comes,
Nor breathes, one adverse wind their joy to chill.
From every hill and dale where sea or streamlet runs,
The call is heard, and selfishness succumbs.
All the eternal verities do thus fulfil
The plan of Him who bade the waves "Be still."

SUMMER.

The world is clad to-day in all the beauty
of rich artistry.
Sweet songbirds' hymn of praise is heard in
all-absorbing harmony.
There is a mystic lure which draws me to
this sacred place,
Where matchless beauty reigns supreme,
adorable, of stately grace.

My heart o'erflows with joy, intoxicated
with this golden mead;
From this rich fount of Nature's purest
nectar is drawn my ev'ry need.
The fields and hedges are bestrewn with
myriads of those sweet wild flowers;
Beyond that trysting-gate is seen the
rarest of rose-bowers.

I yearn to pass my few remaining years
amid such scenes,
To write my thoughts in prose and rhyme,
and thus to realise my dreams.
Ah, me! Meantime life is pulsating steadily
through ev'ry vein.
Back to my duty at the office desk—summer
will call again!

SONNETS.

I.

TIME.

As Sisyphus of old no respite knew,
So with a speed that never alternates
The faultless wheels of Time grind on and on.
No more the traveller may return to view
The garden pathway that he lov'd so well;
The gate is barr'd, and notice boards hang high.
A voice whose cadences so sweet and rare
Re-echo thro' the fast-expiring night,
Bidding us quit the hall for other guests;
Pluto will not release Persephone.
The hours for weal or woe are well nigh spent,
The good we might have done leaves all men poor;
Not all the wealth that earth's vast empires yield,
Can bring us once again the vanish'd year.

II.

THE THRUSH.

High in yon sturdy oak, whose massive girth
Reveals a growth of well-nigh countless years,
A feather'd songster sings his melodies,
Heedless of all our triumphs or our fears.
His liquid notes to highest Heaven ascend,
Unmindful of the sordid ways of man,
His song of rapture rings throughout the vale;
We yearn for freedom such as his, and then—
We listen, all intent, with hearts aglow;
Could we express the thoughts that in us rise—
Could we but soar to some great altitude—
Striving 'gainst wrong, injustice and foul lies.
From early morn till ev'ning shadows fall,
He sings a song no art can imitate.

III.

(Written on hearing of the death of my friend Charles Holmes, of York, deceased October, 1917, aged 93 years.)

He was a gallant comrade, tried and true;
No just cause known he did not dare espouse;
His was a life that all might emulate,
The noblest passion of the soul arouse.
In childlike faith he worshipp'd at the shrine
Of Him who sacrificed His Son, 'tis said,
On the historic mount of Calvary:
The tale of all the ages thus is read.
Sadness and sorrow were much known to him
Throughout a long and strenuous life withal.
The silent messenger steals gently forth,
Thus he who falter'd not answer'd the call.
I wonder if the music that he lov'd
Delights his soul in spheres to us unknown?

IV.

Blue vaulted sepulchre where buried lie
My fondest hopes; there, all the halcyon dreams
Woven by mem'ry in a thousand themes
To which the lips have said a last good-bye;
These all are gone—'twere vain to sit and sigh.
The world is still full rich with precious schemes,
And in the coming harvest days, proud teams
Will garner safely both the wheat and rye.
The master hand that fashion'd this fair world—
Aye, and a thousand other spheres, perchance,
Who knows?—thy soul, his gift, he hath not hurl'd
Into the vapid cauldron of romance;
Thy virtues are the gems he would enhance,
Weaving for thee a diadem impearl'd.

V.

(Respectfully dedicated to the memory of my deceased friend, the Rev. Lucking Tavner, late of the Unitarian Church, Aberdeen.)

Another star from out my firmament hath faded,
Another kindred spirit summon'd to its repose;
We must not mar the time with tears all unavailing,
Lest the dark night o'ertake us, and thus life's record close.
He was belov'd as few men by his kind, a brave soul
Nobly struggling 'gainst ev'ry social wrong; more precious
Deeming truth and justice than worldly fame and riches;
Thus ever loving humanity with impulse strong.
So, tho' to-night my heart is somewhat weary with thoughts
That we may never meet again—the voice so cheery,
Whose tender pleadings we were wont to hear, now vibrates
No more—yet life so full of hope could ne'er be dreary.
It may be in some starry scheme seen in my dreaming
We shall renew the love of bygone years. Yes, who knows?

VI.

(Dedicated with every sentiment of affection and regard to my sincere friend, A.J.C., November, 1917.)

Alone to-night I stand beside the ivied wall,
The tall trees gently converse in the autumn breeze;
A myriad starry envoys shed their beams of light
To banish grief, and calm my wayward soul.
On such a night to be alone with Nature—ah—
To watch in silent ecstasy—and wonder why
He failed (that great designer of a thousand worlds)
To make mankind a replica of good.
Linger awhile, sweet gloaming-tide, thy mellow light
Transforms dull rounds of carping care for weary hearts;
I know not God personified, I only yearn
To share dreams born in the golden twilight.
I care not what the fates may hold in store for me;
Nor reck, my friend, whate'er betide, if thou be near.

VII.

Ah, yes! From this old garden by the wave-wash'd beach,
In pensive mood I've watched the toiler come and go,
Knowing full well one day I too must say "Farewell"
To all that is held dear 'mongst things terrestrial.
Call it not death, this passing from the old-time sphere;
Such fate would prove unworthy of a great design!
The tender loves of long ago, so cherished here,
Perchance will bid us welcome in another clime.
When twilight shadows gather and I sit apart,
Thinking of what is—yearning for what might have been,
How wistful memories wake the once familiar dream,
And something vaguely whispers of the life to be;
A super life made easy by the sojourn here,
A mighty realm where time is compass'd by eternity.

VIII.

(Dedicated to the memory of Mr. J. E. Astin, deceased January 3rd, 1919.)

Of all my many friends thou wert to me
most dear;
Our love was staunch and true thro'
changing years;
And now, alas, I miss thee more than words
can tell;
But sleep, brother, sleep, heed not these
burning tears.
Others will grieve for thee whom thou
didst oft befriend,
The blind poor herded in the city slums;
Freely they gave to thee their love and
reverence—
'Twas all they had to give, thy joy to tend.
Thou peerless light-diffusing orb, whose
radiant blush
Is one great triumph of ecstatic joy,
Sweet moon, canst thou too feel the pangs
of bitter loss,
When stars grow pale and fade from out
the spheres?
Where fragrant lime trees quiver in the
summer breeze,
Sleep gently with the violets in yon secluded
vale.

IX.

(Dedicated with every sentiment of respect and regard to my deceased friend and colleague, the late Sir Arthur Pearson, Bart., December, 1921.)

I kneel beside thy grave, mine honour'd friend,
And shame not that my bitter tears do flow;
The world holds few like thee, and thus to go
When most we needed thee—untimely end.
Here thou dost sleep within this hallow'd grove,
Where sturdy poplars strive to reach the skies,
And mighty elm trees all do seem to rise,
A not unfriendly rivalry to prove.
'Tis here the sweetly perfumed primrose blows,
And the coy violet hides her blushing face.
Unsullied Nature in this holy place
Makes loveliness more lovely as she grows.
Sleep peacefully beneath these sacred mounds;
Rise thou triumphant when Reveille sounds!

X.

An angel visitant whom we call Death is here;
In lowliness and reverence beside this bier,
Grief-stricken, thus we kneel, and strong men shed a tear.
I pray that I may meet my God with no less fear
Than the great soul deliver'd from this earthly sphere.
No more the note discordant shall reverberate—
Let silent be the tongue that would upbraid —too late.
The Last Post sounds, and he hath left our shores, for wait
He may not. We too, ere long, must pass that mystic gate;
We may not know the time, but God hath fix'd the date.
Bon voyage, gracious sire—safe to the nobler state.
O dear departed spirit, wheresoe'er art thou,
We'll weave in fantasy fair garlands for thy brow;
Gethsemane is past, Eternity for thee is now!

XI.

IN MEMORIAM.

(Written in loving memory of an esteemed friend and colleague, Mr. Henry Stainsby, late Secretary-General of the National Institute for the Blind, who died 22nd December, 1925.)

Now is return'd to Mother Earth by loving hands
All that was mortal of a colleague and a friend.
Why should we speak with bated breath of his great life?
'Twas wholesome, pure as an invigorating breeze
Wafted for us o'er wind-swept hills of time.
His was a life majestic in its sweet simplicity;
A blameless life, spent in the service of mankind.
Than this no worthier title monarchs can bestow;
By His Most Gracious Majesty, the King of Kings,
He was commission'd to the task; 'twas nobly done!
Ere the first glimpse of the grey dawn appear'd,
His great immortal soul, set free, return'd to God.
To us he hath bequeath'd a glorious heritage—
A great and useful life—a fragrant memory.

XII.

IN MEMORIAM.

(Mr. David A. R. Jeffrey, late Secretary and Manager of the Cardiff Institution for the Blind, died March 5th, 1926.)

To-night thro' yonder copse a keen March wind is sweeping,
Waking a myriad insects in their leafy mole;
Here tender saplings thrive and catkins sweet are peeping,
And all creation's glory whispers to the soul.
O strangely restless heart of mine, restrain thy weeping!
The friendship we have cherish'd thro' all changing years,
It doth not fade with time; 'tis not a passion fleeting;
Supreme it triumphs over all, it knows no fears.
The all-impelling call was heard at eventide;
A message clear that one day we shall understand;
Touch'd by the mystic hand of death, the soul doth glide
Into the vast Forever—eternal summerland.
So somewhere in the mists of time my soul is seeking
Sweet commune with the arbiter of fate; safe in God's keeping.

XIII.

The Rev. St. Clare Hill,

Late Principal, School for the Blind, Leatherhead, Surrey.

Died June, 1926.

We have no thought or wish to be unkind,
  Death cancels out all controversial strife,
Only remember we, or seek to find
  The true significance of a rich life.
Of stern approach, often misunderstood;
  Owning allegiance to a bygone age;
Impatient of new modes and schemes that could
  Fashion a better world, he could not gauge.
His gifts were great, his limitations few;
  Progressive thought may many guises wear;
With zeal he strove to teach the truth he knew,
  No kindlier soul e'er breathed Heaven's own pure air.
Softly repose amid those Surrey hills,
Where beauty reigns superb—for so God wills!

XIV.

(Written on hearing of the death of Mr. W. H. Illingworth, late Superintendent and Headmaster of Henshaw's Institution for the Blind, Manchester.)

Oh death, inexorable sprite! thine hand is laid
On one whom we held dear, a colleague and a friend.
How rarely have we known such visits welcome made!
Yet could we look upon thee as thou art, and send
Bon voyage to those faithful souls who, unafraid,
Meet life's disasters with a smile, and bravely wend
Their way towards Eternity; if thus essay'd,
Our faith would prove impregnable, our joy distend.
'Tis thus we wish to look upon thee, death, a staid
Condition of a finite state, call'd to ascend
Into the infinite, when our account is paid.
So when for us the great ordeal is at an end,
And we have cross'd the Lethean stream of time,
No pleasure can surpass that which this doth portend.

XV.

Sleep would not answer my despairing call;
Care-worn, I wander'd forth into the night.
A thousand starry sentinels were all
Dancing like glow-worms round a parent light
The Queen Moon made. I heard the wavelets fall
In rhythmic measure on the sandy site,
Where oft in childhood's distant days the tall
Seafaring men, with babes at play, there might
Be seen with Mary, James and Paul.
Onward I sped, not yet was won the fight:
My soul was steep'd in bitterest of gall.
Had truth and justice died? Was nothing right?
Great God of Love! I banish'd Thee as Saul:
Thy peace bequeath, and keep me in Thy sight.

XVI.

(The following lines were written on the occasion of the presentation of a special programme by the British Broadcasting Corporation, the items of which had been previously selected by a staff committee of the National Institute for the Blind.)

To-night with joyous guests the hall doth
throng:
'Tis good to see how they can play the role;
Yet all aglow with fond expectancy,
Each eager for Apollo's feast, and so
The waiting seconds, tense, seem all too
long:
Will that momentous quarter never toll?
Ah, yes! I hear Brahms' rapturous
symphony!
From sober joy to bliss superb we go.
A sea of mem'ries wake with that sweet
song.
Had life been worth the fight? Or had the
goal
Faded, like that dear rose she gave to me?
I may not say, and you can never know.
While music and the arts have power to
charm,
So long mankind need fear no future foe.

XVII.

TO A ROSE.

Sweet rose, no beauty can compare with thine,
All life doth seem renew'd when thou art nigh:
Thy queenly dignity and grace combine
To sweeten toil and soften the sad cry
Of those distress'd. Thy presence is benign.
Thou art an inspiration, not a sigh,
And gazing on thy form is just divine.
Along the narrow leafy lane hard by,
Across the moorlands at the day's decline,
Beyond the bay where the deep waters lie,
Thy fragrance doth transcend distance and time.
Conceiv'd wert thou where love can never die.
Thou wert not fashion'd with poor tools like mine;
God made thee thus, so comely and so shy.

XVIII.

The night hath come when we must take our
leave,
Cancel old vows, the dreams of yesterday;
None may be near to witness our farewell—
None, save those starry sentinels, to peer.
One must forget, and one perchance retrieve
The hours delectable with love at play;
Ere 'tis too late we heed the warning bell:
Our lives apart 'twould seem a course must
steer.
Mem'ry in after years may strive to weave,
With threads of gossamer and gold, a way
Thro' fairy woodlands to a mystic dell;
A path we might have trod, remote from fear:
There, where the rainbow ends, which one
shall grieve?
Or meet we then as now, friend, who shall
say?

XIX.

Alas, we know that all too soon must fade
The glory of these rich autumnal days:
The meadow sweet, where lambkins frisk'd
and play'd,
Is silent now: hush'd are the songbirds' lays.
A softly crooning breeze, shy and afraid
'Twould seem, steals forth, and thro' the
purple haze
The scintillating beauty of the glade
Proclaims the majesty of God. His ways
To us remain inscrutable—He made
With purpose and design all man surveys.
And if perchance, by wayward thoughts
betray'd,
We sometimes faint and stumble in the maze,
The kindly sentinel will not upbraid.
Spirit of truth, this is my song of praise.

XX.

THE OLD SCHOOL.

Tho' for this massive pile no claim is made
That e'er it did possess beauty or grace;
The noblest art that master mind portray'd,
Who impress'd usefulness upon its face:
So that through all the years it thus hath play'd
A glorious role, with credit to our race.
Rich destiny assures its rightful place.
Where are those sires and sons who once inveigh'd
With me? Within those spacious halls I trace
Their dear names one by one, that old brigade—
Those whom tradition never could debase.
The magic thoughts conceiv'd in dreamland's glade
Will rise magnificent, nor time, nor space
Obliterate: thy mem'ry never fade!

XXI.

THE OLD SCHOOL.

There cannot be conceived an object worthier
Than that which did inspire thy fair nativity.
Thy advent did bespeak no dreary enterprise:
Thy birth brought gladness, light and sweetest liberty.
We bless that sacred hour that gave thee form and life,
And to thy massive girth imparted shape and breath:
Thy body and thy lofty soul made consecrate.
Thou art triumphant ris'n from bondage and from death.
If in this busy, fretful, careworn world there be
Aught I may do to heal the wounds of suffering men,
Be it ascrib'd to thy rich fragrant memory.
Pity and love were ours, albeit now, as then,
My soul is fill'd with gratitude for favours past,
My tongue must needs express thy worth while life doth last.

XXII.

OUR SCHOOL.

If skill be mine to sing of thy great worth,
And in a measure sweet and dignified
Thus to confess my great indebtedness,
I speak for thousands less articulate.
In faith supreme and rare was planned thy birth,
Thy influence for good is felt world-wide:
This faith lives on despite of storm and stress;
Thy destiny is sure, inviolate.
Triumphant rise the citadels of earth,
Men come and go, constant as is the tide:
Still goodness thrives and selfishness looms less,
And thou a part hast play'd, worthy and great.
Eternal God! Thou good in everything,
Bless this dear school thro' all its minist'rings.

XXIII.

IN MEMORIAM.

(The Rev. H. G. Rosedale, M.A., D.D., etc., died 14th January, 1928.)

We pause in silent reverence beside this grave.
Here in the cloister'd quietude is laid, alone,
Beneath a grassy mound of fragrant Essex loam,
One of the noblest sons of men God ever gave!
The turmoil of the fev'rish day is at an end,
And acrid controversial tongues are turn'd to praise.
May guardian seraphs greet him with angelic lays!
Their welcome be befriending as he did befriend!
His soul hath left the casket wrought in common clay;
'Twas fashion'd for a fairer garb than man design'd,
A heritage not bought with gold or jewel mined,
That life eternal gain'd, that everlasting day.
Thus all the grief we feel bespeaks the truth we know:
For death must come, and we shall reap as we do sow.

XXIV.

When death steals forth to close the womb of time,
And fondly cherish'd hopes are unfulfill'd;
When thro' the darkness, lured by the last chime,
We breathe farewell, and the tired heart is still'd,
This body wrought of clay and common lime
Must to the earth return, temples to build,
More worthy of the soul, and more sublime.
We strive with shams and vain pretence to gild
The commonplace with hues from ev'ry clime;
But all too soon these sights and sounds that thrill'd
Will fade to insignificance: the prime
Duty and purpose of our lives, thus will'd
By God, reserves no place for waste or crime:
He is the architect! We the unskill'd.

XXV.

With rarest gifts that gold can never buy
This wondrous vast creation doth abound;
Nature array'd in lovely garb draws nigh,
Diffusing joy and gladness all around.
O mystic night, whose Moon Queen reigns on high,
All things mundane are wrapp'd in sleep profound:
Naught save a haunting mem'ry glideth by;
No voice more potent is than such a sound.
No longer do I seek to reason why
Such scintillating beauty here is found:
He who hath smiled upon the world can cry
No havoc to the scheme He did propound.
Dread not this passing phase call'd death, nor sigh
For me if e'er you pass my earthen mound.

XXVI.

Ere time was born, life in eternity began!
Therefore a mind endow'd with knowledge and design
Prepar'd a glorious heritage for every soul.
Thus the Creator's gift is free to every man!
Though difficult the way of life, your tasks and mine
Are set to fit us for a future state; the toll
We pay must needs accord with the Creator's plan.
This cosmic scheme with all its majesty sublime
Is but a school, where day by day we may enrol.
Some are endow'd with skill and enterprise, some scan
With patient toil the mysteries of space and time;
Some, thoughtless, aimlessly do wait without a goal.
Naught then is here destroy'd: no soul doth God e'er ban,
Across the Styx the dawn is fair in that great clime.

XXVII.

From out the silence of this lovely night there steals
A sprite inaudible; something that feels.
A calm responsive soul that to mine own appeals.
That nameless messenger my course doth steer!
Alas for me, the vision did not long remain;
It own'd that life exists beyond this plane:
That task perform'd, it glided forth again.
All will be well beyond this transient sphere!
Oh, holy night, thy mystic spell my soul enthals:
What strange fantastic dreams this hour recalls!
Beneath this wistful moon, beside these ivied walls,
Lord of this wonder-world, I feel thee near!
One day the call will come; meantime I bide me here.
To cross the Lethean stream I have no fear!

XXVIII.

Have I done aught worth while in this my life
To justify the great Creator's plan?
Have I sought zealously to banish strife,
And help make smooth the devious paths of man?
Have I done aught that Christ should be content
To suffer anguish in Gethsemane?
What effort have I made, what service spent
To aid the poor and raise humanity?
Have I done aught to make this sad world bright?
Withheld have I some gift that joy could bring,
And found in selfish pride mine own delight?
What claim have I this melody to sing?
He who doth judge with perfect equity,
My fate must needs decide, whate'er it be.

XXIX.

(Written on the occasion of the 80th birthday of Mr. T. P. O'Connor, M.P.)

'Tis good that in the eventide of life
You can look back upon the days of strife,
Without an enmity or bitter thought:
This glorious heritage cannot be bought.
To fight with brave resolve thro' all the years,
Heedless of countless hosts, their frowns and jeers:
None but God's super-men learn to endure:
They triumph always, for their faith is pure.
Whate'er betide me in the days to be,
May I in darkest hours be ever free
To serve mankind with such fidelity
As, worthy sire, I ever found in thee.
In this thine eventide may every joy
That earth can give be thine without alloy!

XXX.

In sweet reflective mood at eventide,
Whilst yet the sun's declining rays abide,
I gaze enraptur'd as the soft clouds ride
Across a perfect sky, so clear and wide.
A hand omnipotent devis'd unseen
These planets mighty, and the great world theme:
No artist could devise such glorious sheen;
No finite mind conceive this noble scheme.
The blood-red glow I first beheld gave place
To nameless colour-forms, such as embrace
A thousand rainbows merged in one sweet face;
Beauty profound display'd to charm the race.
Never this beauty fades away, nor ever dies;
It comes from God, the eternal and all-wise!

XXXI.

Life is no escapade; no game of chance!
This world no place for trivial dalliance!
Across the years so stealthily Time creeps,
That we our tasks must choose upon its steeps.
Fashion'd were we with purpose and intent,
And in rich service must our time be spent.
Resolv'd are all our plans of yesterday,
New duties press that brook e'en less delay.
Thus then the days in swift succession glide,
Wisely employ'd they ever are our pride;
Not e'en the lure of Paradise to be
Should cause us less to prize life's ecstasy.
And when at length our fleeting day is o'er,
A trusty pilot guides the barque ashore.

XXXII.

ARMISTICE DAY.

No fratricidal conflict more shall reign:
The cruel god of warfare is dethron'd!
To hell's abyss confin'd, never again
To enter this fair world; by all disown'd.
Humanity no longer is beguil'd
By crazy potentates, by men unfit
To guide the ship of state. No more their wild
Appeals avail: for men will not submit.
This great rich world, freed from the scourge of war,
Can now be made a harbour beautiful!
That life should sweeter grow is God's own law;
Of all decrees this stands: none can annul.
Oh, Providence eternal and all wise,
Maintain this peace till judgment day arise!

XXXIII.

Here in this vale, remote and quite obscure,
This fairy-land where glow-worms light the way,
A myriad elves, from prying eyes secure,
Dance in ecstatic joy till break of day.
From out the night, so cold, so clear and still,
Methinks a distant Angelus I hear;
Or is it but an echo from the hill?
Or the sweet streamlet softly singing near?
It may be that the stars seek to express
Some deed of prowess wrought in other spheres;
Or is it just some angel sprite that doth caress
A long-lost soul redeem'd from future fears?
Whate'er it be, it speaks of peace and rest.
We ask no more: what is, is surely best.

XXXIV.

(The late Mr. Charles Wagstaff, deceased August 21st, 1929.)

Those loving hands we press'd but yestere'en,
To-night are pale and motionless in death:
Life's fev'rish fretful hours for him have pass'd.
For us, his mem'ry will remain for ever green.
Of shams and vain pretence he was a foe.
No ritual lur'd him from a simple faith;
He serv'd mankind with zeal and loyalty:
His was no State-made creed design'd for show.
Of future worlds we sometimes vaguely dream;
But Providence we know is at the helm:
He hath decreed that goodness cannot die—
'Twere futile to deplore what might have been.
Oh, architect of planets yet unborn,
Thou hast prepar'd a resurrection morn!

XXXV.

(Written in commemoration of the Louis Braille Centenary, 1929.)

The price of genius cannot be assess'd:
It is a jewel rare, bequeath'd to man
With which to execute some world-wide plan,
To lighten toil or succour the distress'd.
Its birth is not confin'd to palaces;
Statesmen and kings are rarely on its roll:
Only the gods create this perfect soul.
Thus are remov'd our dull infirmities!
No tribute we poor mortals can bestow
E'er can enhance the deed of gift thus made;
Our gratitude, deep and sincere, we strive to show;
This all too small account is gladly paid.
Thou gav'st one genius for our very own,
O God!—then darkness pass'd—now none are lone.

XXXVI.

As oft thro' bustling throngs our way we thread,
Where city traffic roars incessantly,
And men contend by day and night for bread,
Sadly we ponder if such strife must be.
Must we for ever bear these ills we dread?
Can none escape from out this troubled sea?
Must every cherish'd hope be counted dead?
Do fools but dream of immortality?
These, and a thousand questions more fast sped
Thro' every cranny of the mind. Ah, me!
Philosophers and sages none have said
Aught that can solve this deepest mystery.
And yet thro' all the mists of time we gaze,
Where cloud-banks are dispell'd, we see God's rays.

XXXVII.

THE DYING YEAR.

Thou fading year, whose course is well-nigh run,
Regrets go hand in hand with thy demise,
The future days show prizes to be won.
Old worlds have ceas'd to be, new spheres arise.
They perish by the sword they buckled on,
Those pompous puppet statesmen so unwise:
With them the dreams of yestere'en are gone,
No more to masquerade in vain disguise.
No respite can be giv'n thee, dearest one;
Thy little tale is told, and all the sighs
Of yesterday cannot avail—no, none.
Fresh courage take, and dry those tearful eyes!
Come then, O year of grace, we welcome thee!
Bring to the world peace and prosperity.

XXXVIII.

(Written on the occasion of a dinner given to P. M. Evans, Esq., LL.D., January 10th, 1930.)

We pass along the crowded city streets;
A cold moist wind is whining plaintively.
The tired worker to his home retreats.
Down Holborn way the lights are luring me.
A host of friends foregather there to-night
To pay a debt by far too long delay'd;
To blend with one accord our rare delight;
No tribute better earn'd than that now paid.
As round the festive board we meet and give
Without restraint the love and loyalty
We owe, 'tis good in these dark days to live,
To pledge each other thro' the years to be.
Dear honour'd guest, may fate to thee be kind!
Such precious service we but rarely find.

XXXIX.

MANCHESTER.

I love thee more than e'er I dare express,
Thou sombre city of the north; my home!
Thro' all the years of struggle and of stress,
When days are very drear and life is lone,
I see a face and feel a last caress,
I know that epitaph inscrib'd in stone.
The friends of all my early years were here,
The school I love, and all my civic pride
Wakens a thousand mem'ries ever dear;
Some are no more, some scatter'd far and wide.
No son of thine can ever own thy peer,
None sully thy fair name, and none deride.
Thou art a mighty citadel made free
By those who know thy worth and honour thee.

XL.

(In Memoriam. The late Dr. Bridges, Poet Laureate, 1913-1930.)

Within an orchestra of minstrels rare,
One artist is acclaimed 'bove all the rest:
His are the songs that lighten every care,
His music all ennobling, and the best.
When learning and great skill can thus unite
To leave a heritage, mankind to bless,
The architect of this great world was right:
He bade the poet sing of happiness.
Thine was a mission of supremest worth:
The genius of felicity attended thee.
Nor hath it failed thee at a second birth:
Thy spirit doth survive where it would be.
This fretful sphere is happier for thy song.
Mine is the joy to listen now, and long.

XLI.

AUTUMN.

Mine is the joy supreme at autumntide
To wander at my ease the woodlands o'er;
To revel in the colour-schemes that bide,
Alas, too brief a spell, then are no more.
O'er moorlands wide and rugged steeps to climb,
From Chiltern Hills to where the Mendips rise;
Tho' boist'rous winds career and daylight dies,
This lovely land grows ever more sublime.
Here I can breathe my fill of Heaven's pure air:
Life is a banquet rich beside this rill;
With scented loam no incense can compare,
Nature makes impotent the chemist's skill.
E'en the late thrush delights with song mine ear:
When life is full of care I'll hie me here.

XLII.

IN REGENT'S PARK.

Across this vast expanse soft breezes blow :
From Marylebone to Camden Town they steal.
Each oft frequented path how well I know!
No place in all the world doth so appeal.
The neat and spacious lawns are a delight,
My feet those favourite walks exultant tread;
Here beauty reigns in majesty and might.
The squirrels gather round me and are fed.
Would that these fleeting hours might be
deferr'd!
By song-birds to Elysium I am led :
Oh, sing thy songs delectable, sweet bird,
Minstrels superb to super-minstrels wed!
Then every sordid thought is put to flight,
For God is very near, and God is light!

XLIII.

IN REGENT'S PARK.

Gladly I leave the noisome, dusty road,
To seek the quietude and breathe the air
Of this fair place. Here am I free! The code
Of conduct I must needs obey can ne'er
Survive where liberty the song-birds' ode
Hath ceas'd to charm. The things for which I care
Are garner'd safely in this sweet abode:
Nature in fulsome grandeur doth prepare
A banquet all magnificent, whose mode
No human skill can emulate. All share
The pure ecstatic joy she hath bestow'd.
All deeply do imbibe her nectar rare.
Full fourteen years I've worshipp'd at this shrine.
If Heaven be near—then, Regent's Park be mine!

XLIV.

(Written on hearing of the death of Miss Edith M. Vance.)

Within this copse is heard the hum of bees,
A blackbird sings entrancingly hard by;
I listen (though my heart is ill at ease)
Enraptured by that magic melody.
In sweet accord converse the giant trees—
Ripe luscious fruit among the branches lies.
Why then be sad, when Nature so doth please?
'Tis good to know such beauty never dies.
Thus Nature's plan immortal life decrees,
And friendships are not sunder'd by a sigh:
So when the hand of death the spirit frees,
All we have ever yearn'd for will be nigh.
Our comradeship renew'd will be again,
Resolv'd the mysteries of death and pain.

XLV.

SWEET SUN AND RAIN.

Why is life so bereft of charm to-day?
Where are the birdeens with their joyous songs?
The lambkins, too, seem to forsake their play,
And nothing is that to our earth belongs.
Those pond'rous clouds and dull grey skies will clear:
Be sure they are not fraught with ill intent:
They were design'd by one great engineer—
Great God! Thine was the genius to invent!
Our thirsty land will drink the plenteous rain,
The beauty of the trees and flowers revive;
Lambkins will frisk and birdeens sing again,
And this great world, as is its wont, will thrive.
Sweet sun and rain, creation's gifts to man,
Are thus bequeath'd to vindicate a plan.

XLVI.

SWEET HARROW HILL.

Upon this eminence serenely stands
A monument to service consecrate!
This precious and unrivall'd gift to youth
Hath brought her sons renown in every state.
The sun is setting o'er sweet Harrow Hill,
Its wistful grandeur is beyond compare!
A madrigal resounds from yonder wood;
All things superbly beautiful are there.
These favourite walks, those trees and flowers
are mine,
I revel in their beauty and delight;
How may I utter all I know and feel?
For Heaven is very near to me this night.
Thou monument of service unsurpass'd,
Our sons will cherish thee while time doth
last!

XLVII.

THE LATE EARL OF BIRKENHEAD.

This transient phase which we call life is past:
His was a hard and stern philosophy,
Express'd in burning eloquence; yet cast
Aside for friendship and humanity.
By merit gain'd, on him were shower'd fast
The prizes coveted, the fame to be
For a brief spell enjoy'd; and then at last
Borne hence was he, leaving a memory.
We climb with halting steps this expanse vast,
This mystic universe; this troubled sea
We sail; nor fear that compass, chart and mast
Will fail, ere yet is reach'd Eternity.
So we consign to thee, O Mother Earth,
The mortal he: the soul—God gave it birth!

XLVIII.

(Written after an early morning visit to Covent Garden.)

Ere yet the glory of the morning's sun
Hath kiss'd the pearly grass with her soft rays,
I wend my way where toil seems never done,
And Nature's bounteous wealth is seen always.
A hall of beauty unsurpass'd is here;
Fair floral tributes from rich continents,
Perfumes whose rare voluptuousness brought near
Doth sweeten life and soften discontents.
Vast stores of produce rang'd on every hand
Speak loudly of man's unremitting toil;
Nature responding to his firm command
Doth thus yield up the treasures of the soil.
'Tis good to strive for that which we must eat:
Only the bread we truly earn is sweet!

XLIX.

"THE GREEN MAN."

Oh, Harry Preece, why tempt me thus to stray
Across the portals of this hostelry?
The food is good, the vintage excellent;
But yet you know how loath am I to stay.
Though I must needs prefer 'gainst you this crime,
And in my youthful innocence sublime
Take rest awhile in Chaplin's gay saloon,
I hate the thought when Stanley calleth "Time!"
We are but few who thus forgather here,
Statesmen, without authority, I fear;
Knowing the right, we must inveigh 'gainst wrong:
For every ill is banish'd from our sphere!
The books we love are ever favourite themes,
They are our gardens of romance, our dreams!

L.

HENRY J. WILSON,

Late Secretary, Gardner Trust for the Blind.
Died February, 1931.

With certitude we now can measure time.
Terrestrial distance is within control;
Nature her secrets yields in every clime;
Mankind is wiser than the sires of old.
And yet, with all our knowledge of the spheres,
Mere infants are we in God's nursery:
Our movements are beset with hopes and fears:
A future life we do but dimly see.
This casket, wrought in chemicals and lime
To earth returned, will then remoulded be;
A truer replica perchance will climb
The rugged slopes that lead to peace and Thee.
For each Thou hast prepared a destiny,
Death is the gateway to eternity!